

Dear, dear Joe,

3/13/90

Your much-appreciated letters of the 8th, 9th and 10th all came yesterday. Were it not that I spent the day writing Edwards, I'd have responded immediately because I do appreciate your offer very much. And your persistence in pressing me to get cracking on it. But there are some things you do not understand, although I have addressed them.

Besides the fact that what you propose has been done, except for my personal experiences, which are not atypical. If I can find a book that is closer than most to what you have in mind I'll copy the cover and enclose it. If I do not, its title is, "Are You Now, Or Have You Ever Been, In FBI Files?" It was done by a committee of lawyers in New York City. The University of Wisconsin also turned out a book on one of my lawsuits.

One thing you have not understood is that I have not said "no." I've given you reasons for my thinking it won't work but I've also told you I have not entirely rejected the idea.

More, as I think I told you, I started keep a file of the reminiscences where I'd not been keeping copies before because, for one thing, of the problem I have with my lack of mobility and inability to stand still, with filing.

But I now have a file of them on my desk, in the desk organizer, which permits storing file folders vertically.

If I do the book there is so much to remember I'll not be able to remember it all in planning the book. And if I do not do it, that much will be available in the archive I'll leave for anyone who might want to do something similar in the future.

I don't have the records I should have made because I did not make them in the past, over the years of these experiences. So these reminiscences will to a degree substitute for the records I did not make.

On the other hand, I've not censored anything in my voluminous files and I've kept all correspondence, except for some of these personal things that I'm now keeping. If I've made mistakes I've also preserved them for any future interest. I've heard from at least 15,000 strangers when most of the time it was not easy for them to get an address for me and some of the time, when the post office was no longer forwarding our mail, it was returned to sender. My first three books have the address we left in 1967 and the fourth has no address at which we could be reached. It came out after we moved but the publisher did not change the address on the foreword when we lived at Frederick.

I do not pretend any false modesty but I also did not and do not have the kind of ego required, I think, for the book you have in mind. I pretend no false modesty about what I have done or the difficulties doing it posed. But I also do not go around tooting my own horn or putting it on paper.

My first book was the first book on the Warren Commission. I brought to light just about all the information, as distinguished from idle theories, that has come to light and is not in support of the official mythologies in the JFK and King assassinations. What I did not publish of the available information for the most part I am the one who forced it out of government files through my FOIA lawsuits one of which led to the amending of that Act to reopen FBI, CIA and similar files. I've gotten about a third of a million pages, a not inconsiderable achievement, particularly when I was for all practical purposes broke when I did all of this and when my first hospitalization for venous thrombosis was right after my last book went to the printer. Except for a negligible percentage of them, I got all those records by litigation that began after the first of my series of serious illnesses. Most of the time I could not drive to Washington for the court hearings or to confer and since 1980, I've not been able to do this at all because I've had nobody who could drive me and could not use the bus any more. So, if I don't talk about it, I am aware of both the importance and the unusualness of what I've done and of the exceptional difficulties under which I did it.

I've never thought that anyone owes me anything for this. I do, genuinely, believe that in a representative society in particular citizens bear a responsibility ~~to~~ the society. I do not mean this in the sense that JFK said "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." There are many, many people who are in urgent need of what their country can do for them and the ~~country~~ country should be doing those things for them.

We are all of us, as I see it, born with, in Robert Frost's words, promises to ^{keep} ~~keep~~ in the miles we go before we sleep, a time that is now much closer for me. (But as you will ~~see~~ see in my yesterday's letter to Edwards, I do still try.) These promises vary greatly because all people do not have the same capabilities or visions or ideas. I was able to do what I did so to the degree I succeeded I kept my promises and when I did not succeed, I tried. And there is no more to it than that, I was a good citizen, and that should be an assumption, not something for which anything is owed.

In some ways I may have carried this to excess. In the early days, after my first book was out, I made public appearances without the kind of honorarium that was usual and not infrequently without any honorarium. That was silly and it was shortsighted. I needed that income for daily needs and for the needs of my work. But it was the way I then felt.

I can't begin to calculate the thousands of unpaid hours I've put in, without any compensation at all, helping others who, for the most part in more recent years, I have not agreed with. From making information available, to editing, to ~~making~~ helping reporters and radio and TV people, even to helping promote competitive books. Nobody required this of me. It is part of the promises to me.

I've turned down an annuity for Lil, with her assent, for my files and instead have given them and all else away, with no quid pro quo, because I think they will be much more useful as an archive at the local small college than where they'd have been with that annuity for Lil.

I'm trying to explain to you the way I am and the way I feel and why I do not have the required kind of ego for the book you are urging on me, as I see it.

Of course I'm not saying that there can't be more than one book on any ^usubject and that because of what has been published there are no prospects for anything else along those lines. What I am saying, though, is that the book will not serve a purpose not already served and that, to a degree, it would be ego indulgence. Nothing wrong with that if ~~one~~ ^uone wants it.

Were I able, there are other books I'd prefer, as I think I may have gone into in the recent past. (I don't now remember the recent past as well as I do the distant, I suppose a combination of age and the circulatory problems, which reduce the flow of blood to the brain somewhat.) What is attractive in what you have in mind is the fact that if I get my energy back I won't have to search files for the material I need and for citation and quotation, not precluded for me. No doctor has indicated that I'll ever be able to stand still again, for example. So, without someone to do that for me, get the records and refile them, for all practical purposes most of my records are not accessible to me now.

As you have not understood, I not only lack energy now, for the past couple of weeks I've been increasingly tired. I have my annual physical next week and I've written to the doctors at Johns Hopkins for appointments next month, the earliest the Hopkins cardiologist said I should. Last week the local cardiologist had me wear the 24-hour heart monitor and any time beginning yesterday it will be analyzed. If something shows up, I'll hear from him.

It is not only a lack of energy and tiredness. Tiredness did not keep me from working all day yesterday in the effort to help Edwards and his committee. But all of this is quite disconcerting and it interferes seriously with concentration that is required for any

kind of writing. These medical problems intrude themselves and one can't really do much about that. If I sit too long they sure do and if I don't and get up, and walk around as I'm supposed to, that interferes with concentration. You have to be able to concentrate to write. If you cannot the writing suffers much.

I got up to go out for the mail but Lil wants that bit of exercise and when away from the typewriter something else came to mind, which has me skipping back a bit. A dear friend who is a history professor coauthored the only professional, scholarly bibliography of the field in which I work. I have his biblio, I've been told he speaks very highly of my work, and I've not read it. I suppose in part this is because I do not want to be influenced by anything like that, kudos. The work I did should not be influenced by any such considerations or whether it will be liked or not liked, praised or not praised. And having said this, perhaps I should read it in the event at some point citation of it serves a useful purpose, something other than ego gratification.

You do not understand the medical restrictions and limitations I'm under. Today it is now 70 degrees, a beautiful day. I have fruit trees that should be sprayed but the cardiologist said no and I'm not doing it. That does bother me and when I look up and see how nice a day it is, this need intrudes into my mind. It is not that the value of the fruit is that great. Rather is it that the trees will be protected from infestations. They'll be healthier trees. The soil here is not good and the trees can't survive being weakened as well as they could in planted in rich soil. If we lose a tree or two it will not be that big a deal, but we just don't want to lose them.

Have to suspend from something in the mail.

You say I have not given you a good reason for not accepting your offer. Aside from the fact that I have not rejected it, I have given you reasons for my hesitancy that I think are not frivolous and are good.

You say take a breather from some of the correspondence and do the book. In order to do the book I have to recall much more than I can by sitting down and preparing an outline. Getting things on paper is one way of having them available.

You ask if I believe that Ray can prove the FBI killed King. Of course not and I know of no reason to even suspect that it did. That is probably a notion he got from Mark Lane.

You ask if anyone has proved that JFK was killed as the result of a conspiracy. Under the law conspiracy requires a combination to do wrong and then an overt step in pursuit of the conspiracy, the latter to remove the question of free speech. If you have in mind who did it, then the answer is a clear no. But that the assassination was a conspiracy I did prove over and over again by proving that the crime was beyond the capability of any one person and thus was a conspiracy. To give you one illustration, I proved that shots came from at least two directions and no one person could have done that.

You say the public is satisfied with the official explanation and is willing to let sleeping dogs lie. The latter may or may not be so because there is no way for the public to let that be known. But when you say the people are satisfied, they never were, not a majority, and as of the last poll between 8 and 9 to 1 were not satisfied. You ask who cares and the answer again is pretty clear, the people do care and say so but there is nothing they can do about it.

I'm glad you liked my letters to "Roll an" to Frontline. I've heard from him and I've written him further. I've sent you copies or they are enclosed.

I'm not consumed about my roots but lately I've become curious and, never having tried to learn before, I'm making a few slight efforts. It is not a consuming passion.

I agree with you that much of what is in my archive will not see the light of day but that is an argument against your proposal because it suggests that what effort I can expend in writing should be spent in bringing to light what otherwise may never be.

The book you propose is not designed to bring to light what is not known.

Where you refer to the documentation for the book you suggest, you have no idea the number of places to be searched and the volume in each. It is not just the records in question that the FBI and/or CIA did disclose. It is also the efforts to get them and what they refuse to disclose and the number of different lawsuits in which these materials were used and how and the many appeals in futile efforts. We are talking about a large number of file drawers. Any kind of systematic search is visionary. It would require too much reading of too many documents in too many files. The only way there can be a practical search, where there is documentation, is to be begin knowing what is wanted and then undertaking to find it.

You refer to your ignorance about writing a book and what it takes. That can be a great variable. What can be very difficult for one person might be easy, if that is the right word, for another. One kind of book can be easy for one writer while another kind of book can be quite difficult for him. For some people, some topics can make the great labor of writing a book a joy and not a labor, while that same topic can be a loveless labor and a painful one. *for someone else.*

What may be hard for you to believe is a story I'll tell you about my first book. I wanted to continue with my researches so I signed a contract with a publisher who provided a coauthor. We met often, I gave him copies of my research and we had a contract to deliver the finished manuscript 2/15/65. About the middle of January I found that this man, who'd been a professional writer all his life, was hopelessly lost and was getting little done. We met in a German restaurant two friends of mine then had in Washington and we decided that I would do half and he would do half, and then we decided what each would include, handle. He was then doing public relations for Publicker in Phila. so at the appointed time I drove up to go over what he had done. It was scandalous, unprintable and an outrageous political diatribe. He was even trying to prove that the ACLU was behind the assassination! Later I learned he was a friend and follower of William Buckley. I was so upset driving home that I forgot to take the Baltimore Beltway, which is the road here, and suddenly realized I was in the tunnel under the Baltimore harbor, on my way to Washington. The next morning I phoned the publisher, told him what I'd seen, and said that I'd do the book and told him what I had drafted. I then mailed what I'd drafted to him and went to work on the rest. Boy did I work! But I did half off the first book and I had the last of what I wrote retyped and I mailed it the 15th. It took me about a month to write all of the first book and I didn't even have an outline on paper. And, among other things, it was runner-up for the mystery writers award in 1966. I had nothing to do with entering it and still don't know how that happened. They asked me for copies and I sent them. This, of course, oversimplifies much but it makes the point that while I had to work very hard and with almost no sleep, and I was under great emotional stress, doing it was not suffering and by and large I did it well. I've not had any error in it called to my attention and I know of none.

When I wrote my third book there then were other things I had to do, like promoting and mailing out the first two. The text is not nearly as long and there is a fairly extensive appendix, but on the 28th day after I wrote the foreword I had the first 100 copies of the bound book at my home. I have been able to work this fast in the past. But among other things, I was not writing about myself.

In the past I've had a similar production record with the multitudinous affidavits I filed in court but I worked out an acceptable formula for doing them—responding to the government almost paragraph for paragraph, so I had no real outline to do. I could sit down and just go ahead and do it. Considerable effort was required for all the above but the chief requirement of that effort was energy, which I had in great abundance then. I had no emotional conflicts and I knew the material.

I've never really written about myself and frankly, I'm a bit uneasy about it. And unlike what I was writing about in my books, I'd never given it any thought at all. Best, Fine columns, thanks.

Sam